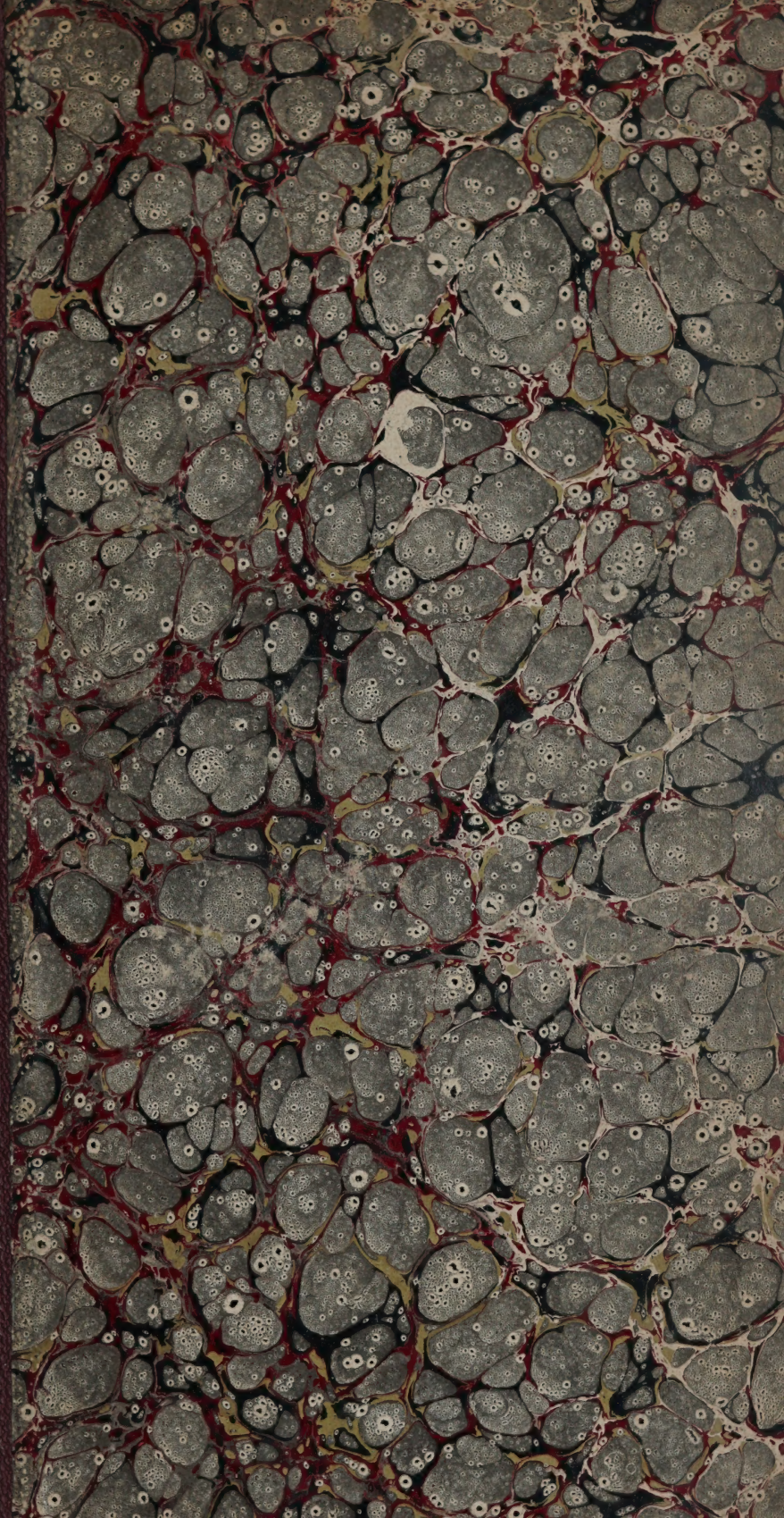

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THEODORE PARKER:

The Good and the Evil in his Opinions and Influence.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE

4265.221

BROMFIELD STREET M. E. CHURCH,

SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1860.

BY REV. WM. FAIRFIELD WARREN.

"I am no Flatterer, nor public Liar-general, — when such a one is wanted, he is easily found, and may be had cheap; and I cannot treat great men like great babies. So, when I preached on Mr. Adams, who had done the cause of freedom such great service, on General Taylor, and Mr. Webster, I aimed to paint them exactly as they were, that their VIRTUES might teach us, and their VICES warn." — THEODORE PARKER.

BOSTON:
CHASE, NICHOLS, & HILL,
43 WASHINGTON STREET.
1860.

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William Lloyd Garrison
July 8, 1899.

In view of various serious misapprehensions which have resulted from the imperfection of published reports, and from the remarks of strongly prejudiced auditors, the author of the accompanying discourse regards it as due to the public and to himself, — but especially to Mr. Parker's friends, — that the discourse itself be published in full. In this way only can all interested ascertain, each for himself, what was said and what was not. He earnestly hopes that each will read it in the same calm, candid, undeclamatory manner in which all who heard it will attest it was originally delivered. There are very many passages capable of conveying a much more dogmatic and uncharitable impression than was actually conveyed in the delivery. Believing, with Mr. Parker's own intensity, in the right of free utterance for honest opinion, but with equal intensity in personal fallibility, the writer boldly yet modestly submits the discourse to the public eye. It will pass for what it is worth.

BOSTON:
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10 Devonshire Street.

DISCOURSE.

Christian Friends, — The bell which summons us together this evening swings not in a Boston steeple. The muffled tollings to which you timed your footsteps as you came up hither, came from far, — they issued from a storied campanile of Italy. Floating to us over sea and ocean, they have lost the harsh metallic clangor of the belfry, and melted into music, soft, subduing. Even so let now all other tongues, which choose to signalize the exit of the departed, chasten their cold and ringing utterance into gentleness and ruth.

The fact that an immortal being has gone up from the busy habitations of men to stand in the presence of the great God, there to be alloted some new sphere of existence, with new and strange and endless activities and passivities, — this one fact would seem enough to arrest the attention of a universe. This, however, is not the fact which gives such interest to this hour, — not the fact which has drawn this assembly together. Such facts are momently transpiring; and we are therefore forced to husband up our emotion, curiosity, and speculative interest to expend upon such striking and important celestial translations as come within the sphere-limits of our own interests, sympathies, and friendships. Such a translation has marked the month now closed.

It was afar off; but distance is only one of the circumstances lending a heightened, and even romantic, interest to the event. The merest lounger on the *Lungo l' Arno* would have felt a

momentary interest excited in his sluggish soul could he have been told, as that little veiled and draped funeral-train bore Parker's corse to the *Campo Santo*, "There goes a stranger to his rest, four thousand miles from home." There is an air of touching romance about the death of any pilgrim on any foreign shore. How much more when *such* a pilgrim dies in *such* a clime! It is a son of rugged, cold New England dying in the sunny clime of Italy; it is the poor farmer-boy of Lexington ending his wanderings, his struggles, labors, life in beautiful, classical Florence.

How choice a place and time to die! — there, in that sweet basin through which the classic Arno winds it way, the sanctuary of Art, the theatre of Europe's Renaissance, the home of the Medici, the city of proud republican traditions, of present beauty and promise. What a grand Nebo does Fiesole's ancient head afford from which to gaze over into the unknown land! what sweet breezes are those of Bellosguardo to cool a dying brow! Stands not Galileo's astronomic tower there still, from which to reconnoitre heaven? Who could ask a prouder burial than to be laid under the same hallowed soil which covers the dust of Michael Angelo, Macchiavelli, Galileo, Guicciardini, Alfieri, Aretino?

And then the time, — beautiful May! How sweet and fresh and life-giving seemed those swelling hill-sides; how bloomed those matchless gardens; how gently played the zephyrs of spring! Cathedral and chapel even are full of green trees and festooned flowers; for it is Mary's festival. Bewildered birds, losing themselves in the green groves under the lofty church arches, pour forth their riotous joy in holy places, unmindful of ostiarius or beadle. How the gay fountains dance and sparkle in the shimmering sun! How rare a time to spread the couch for a peaceful death! Nothing around so much as whispers of the great natural and moral disturbances of the world. The rumbling earthquakes are all hushed; winter's ruin is hid beneath a wealthier robe of beauty; the storms of revolution which beat and rage around Sicilia's ancient coast are all unheard. Quiet, charming, musical Tuscany — joyful, May-clad, emancipated Tuscany — spreads out

her lap, and in it hushes her weary, fainting, foreign lover to his slumbers.

But not yet have we reached *the* feature of this late event which gives it interest through the world. It is not because of death's inherent solemnity, nor because of this death's peculiar romance, that the nation pauses, even in the midst of political turmoils and "anniversary week" excitements, to discuss the recent news from Florence. Other men die; other sons of New England have had the honors of Italian burials. Why, then, *are* we here?

I answer: The death of Theodore Parker is the cessation of one of the great forces of the moral and immoral culture of the American people, and hence is an event of social, political, and religious interest to every American citizen. I have invited you in hither, not with a design to inform you what disposition the world's great Judge has made of his soul; not to felicitate the American churches upon the sudden removal of the great gainsayer; not to intone a jubilant *Te Deum* over the end of a heretic, — but to tell you in all candor what I think of the reputation, opinions, and influence of the fallen teacher. I am aware of the delicacy of the task. I expect to displease both friends and foes. I expose myself and my motives to misconstruction, and perhaps shall not succeed even in saying what I really mean. But, whilst realizing all this, I deem the closure of Theodore Parker's lips an event of too great importance, an event too nearly and deeply affecting the interests of American Christianity, to be suffered to pass unnoticed. Should any be disposed to remind me that "of the dead good only is to be spoken," I would simply say, such was not the maxim of him of whom we speak. Whilst yet the eyes of the nation were wet with the tears called forth by Webster's death, Theodore Parker stood up to utter his estimate of the good and the evil wrought by that great man. I do but follow his example.

My acquaintance with Mr. Parker was partly epistolary, partly personal. How it began I do not remember. It was never particularly cultivated on either side. He always left the latch-string out for me, but never drew me into unsolicited

intimacy. My acquaintance was sufficient to give me insight into the man's character, yet not enough to blind and prejudice me. I was always thankful that he never seemed to try to lay me under obligation. He would, indeed, sometimes give me a handful of recent sermons or lectures, but always with the open understanding that the communication of his views was as great a pleasure to him as their reception could be to me. I have eaten salt with him, but only "Attic salt." Accordingly, though I fully agree with the writer who declares that "the next most atrocious thing to flaying a man alive is to *Gilfillanize* him," — that is, insinuate yourself into his society and confidence to get material for public tattle, — I do not feel at all fettered in my utterance to-night by any of those obligations which personal kindness and hospitality ought always to beget. The only obligation of this sort of which I am conscious is that I am under to him for his kind consideration, if such it was, in leaving me thus free.

The influence of Mr. Parker and of his writings upon my own mind was never very great. As my acquaintance with his writings was prior in point of time to my acquaintance with the man, I will first speak of them.

I was living in a southern city, almost within hearing of the beating surf of the Mexican Gulf, when various discourses of Mr. Parker fell into my hands. For months I had been laboring under speculative difficulties, which I felt must be settled before I could ever lay the foundation and carry up the structure of an intelligent and satisfactory faith. I was more than a thousand miles from any relative or tried friend; completely emancipated from all home and educational associations; dependent upon none for livelihood or preferment; entirely free to form and adjust my views of religion, society, and life according to my own convictions. I think I had a little of that foolish ambition, which few young men wholly escape, to use this liberty, and "think for myself." At any rate I did use it. It was in the midst of my consequent perplexity and strain of mind that I perused Mr. Parker's discourses, actually predisposed in his favor, and hoping to be helped to relief. But I found none: why, I hardly knew

then, though I have seen since. As I look back now upon my painful struggles in that distant city, I can see that my difficulty was a purely speculative one. It involved the determination of the question, What is the ultimate ground of scientific certitude? Parker, of course, gave me no answer to that question. I was determined to accept no man's teaching until he could prove its truth to me. Mr. Parker taught me of the existence of a personal God; but, when I asked for the proof, I found that he could adduce no particle of evidence not adduced by Paley and Chalmers. Indeed I thought his argument the least convincing of the three. So I piled them all away together, — Parker at the bottom, Paley next, and Chalmers atop. Then I returned to my proper problem. Such sceptics as Pyrro and Bishop Huet delighted me; but Mr. Parker seemed to me to have no better reason for his beliefs than the straightest orthodox for theirs. So much for the influence of his general theological writings.

Mr. Parker's carefully elaborated version of De Wette's "Introduction to the Old Testament" was the first work I ever owned in the department of biblical criticism and interpretation. It was my sole manual for several years; yet I found, in various quarterlies and theological encyclopœdias, such conclusive demolishments of its main hypotheses and principles, that I held my judgment in check. Subsequently, when I came to prosecute my studies in Germany, I found how perfectly extravagant was the remark of Mr. Parker, that De Wette was "the ablest writer in the world on that theme." I found that Dr. De Wette was a forgotten man. Though ten years had not passed since his voice had ceased to be heard in the auditoriums of Berlin, not a party, not a disciple was to be found to perpetuate his memory, or disseminate his principles. Indeed he had no system. Whilst his heart was enlisted for Christian truth, his head was turned and confused by the influences of his time. He confesses his life a failure in these touching lines, written but a little before his death, and communicated to the American public by Dr. Schaff: —

Ich fiel in eine wirre zeit,
  Des Glaubens Einfalt war vernichtet.
Ich mischte mich mit in den Streit;
  Doch, ach! Ich hab' ihn nicht geschlichtet.

("I lived in times of doubt and strife,
  When, childlike, faith was forced to yield.
I struggled to the end of life;
  Alas! I did not gain the field.")

In the new developments of Germany, De Wette has fallen into complete oblivion. Some of his works, such as his Commentaries, are valuable for their extensive collation of other men's views; but all that was original with him is repudiated or forgotten, by both Orthodox and Rationalists. He has been completely superseded; and we are sorry to see attempts made, at the present day, to force this antiquated lumber into popular circulation, as the last and best result of German scholarship. It is a wrong to the German infidels themselves. Baur and Strauss would resent such an allegation. For all practical and popular purposes, be it remembered, De Wette is utterly worthless. To the American public, his reproduction here was as great a misfortune, as the publication was pecuniarily disastrous to its editor.

My personal intercourse with Mr. Parker was confined to his study. What a great storehouse of learning it was! What ranges of vellum and sheep bound tomes were there, piled from floor to ceiling! Yet with what honest pride he used to point out that shabby, worn-out old copy of Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary as the nucleus of the whole collection, the first book he ever owned, and tell of the quarts and quarts of blueberries he had to pick to pay for it! In the way of art, I remember nothing save that little marble statuette or bust of Christ, which stood upon his study table, watching each stroke of that potent pen! It used to pain me to see it there, and the marble lineaments themselves were sad. Our conversation was usually general, though sometimes he would ask me what I intended to do. He had a great many erroneous impressions respecting the doctrines and spirit of Methodism, some of which, I hope, were cor-

rected. When I told him I was going to Germany, he seemed delighted, and gave me some very characteristic advice. "Go to Tubingen" (the last citadel of German Rationalism); "go to Tubingen," said he, "by all means. Tubingen sustains the same relation to Germany to-day, which Wittenberg did in the sixteenth century!" This advice, like much other, I took the liberty of playfully laying upon the table.

Among the theologians of the Old World, Mr. Parker is, of course, little known. In England, the Infidel party have found his writings very saleable and serviceable ready-made material; and therefore there he has had great circulation. England, however, has before had the deistic disorder; and those who have passed through the varioloid seldom contract the smallpox. In Germany, it is true that Mr. Parker's writings have been translated; but a translation into the tongue of that omnivorous people, who reproduce every modern publication down to such as the Mormon Bible and the "Great Harmonia," is surely an equivocal compliment. Most of the German theologians who have looked over his writings seem to regard him as a rather spicy re-hasher of their earlier rationalistic literature. Strauss told me he had read his critique on the "*Leben Jesu*," and thought Mr. Parker would have to put that into his Retractations, if he ever published any. In Italy he is unknown; although an article published in 1857, in the Jesuit organ, "*La Civilta Cattolica*," *Sopra il Presente e L' Avenire del Cattolicismo negli Stati Uniti*, has furnished its readers a very elaborate and tolerably fair exposition of the theological movements in which he is so prominent a landmark. His reputation and influence are almost exclusively cis-Atlantic. We should naturally expect it to be so. In those old countries the doctrines of Mr. Parker are threadbare, the tritest of all trite things. Here their singularity gave to their talented advocate a "lone conspicuity," which would have rendered the commonest man a celebrity. Circumstances have contributed more to the growth of Mr. Parker's reputation, than to that of any other religious teacher of whom I know. His native talent, unique

style, power of sarcasm, unflagging industry, and wide range of feed, all did something; but all these, directed in ordinary and inconspicuous channels of usefulness, would never have made the name of Theodore Parker a household word from Maine to California. I will not say that there are in the active American ministry twenty men of the same reading with Mr. Parker; but I do but utter my honest, unbiased estimate of his native power, when I say, that, from my acquaintance with that ministry, North and South, East and West, I honestly think there are at least five hundred, who, had they lived and moved under the peculiar circumstances which gave Parker this prominence in American eyes, could and would have achieved and maintained a fame at least equal to his.

We now come to the determination of the good and the evil which has accrued to the American people from this great didactic career now closed for ever. God give us wisdom to rightly and wisely discriminate. Mark well, and continually remember, that in the following remarks I do *not* speak of Mr. Parker's moral character. I speak of *his influence*, and of that *only*. I shall not undertake to determine how far the good results of his ministry are instances of God making the wrath of man to praise him, nor how far the evil effects were undesigned, and contrary to his wishes.

1. Among the beneficent results of Mr. Parker's ministry, I mention, first, his influence upon public opinion with respect to the subject of Education. However we may differ from Mr. Parker in religious matters, however we may question the details of his educational scheme, all intelligent, large-minded men must feel that the public owes no insignificant debt of gratitude to him, for that ardent zeal and unwearying effort which he ever displayed in advocacy of a thorough, practical, yet liberal education of all the people. Himself by birth a plebeian, by instinct a leveller, by choice a Jeffersonian, he could tolerate no sacred reservations in behalf of classes, least of all the monopoly of knowledge. Feeling that universal education was at once the right of all,

and a necessity of our political and social institutions, he threw his whole soul enthusiastically into his pleas whenever opportunity was afforded for them. For the service thus rendered in the formation and sustenation of a healthy public sentiment on this subject, I would bring, and in the name of all lovers of man lay upon Parker's tomb, a fadeless wreath of gratitude.

2. Secondly, he preached and lectured against Intemperance. Herein he was a national benefactor. He has our thanks. This service, however, is sometimes overrated. A careful study of his utterance will show us, I think, that, instead of penetrating to the hearer's conscience, and showing him the inherent *sin* of this form of self-indulgence, he contented himself usually with depicting to him those attendant and consequent evils, which are so intrinsically ghastly as to scarcely need depiction, and then giving him a little Poor Richard advice to keep clear of the habit which leads thereto. The motives which he sets forth are seldom drawn from any higher plane than merely the prudential. He cast his influence against that legislation which stands upon our statute book to protect the people from their poisoners, and was no doubt entitled to some share of the responsibility of defeating its execution in Boston. Still he meant, honestly meant, to foster temperance and purity, and all affiliated virtues; and, so far as he succeeded, Boston and the Commonwealth are bound to grateful acknowledgment.

3. We regard the influence which Mr. Parker has exerted upon the public mind with respect to the position of woman, the Peace movement, and kindred reforms of the day, as on the whole beneficent. Less radical than the self-constituted champions of these various causes, yet at the same time in advance of the general public, he has served to modify the violence of the one party, and to open the eyes of the other. On doctrines and projects so inchoate as are most of these to which we refer, no man can expect to find another who will perfectly agree with him on all points. Mr. Parker's views seem to have been well matured, and in the main safe. His brave words in exposition and enforcement of them have done good.

4. Fourthly, we instance the political services of Mr. Parker. These we regard as infinitely outweighing all others which he ever rendered to his native land. The grandest thing he ever did was to stand up in this northern metropolis, at a time of decadent public sentiment, and month after month demand the rigid subordination of human authority to God's. In certain classes not easily reached by other agencies, he did very much to generate and keep alive a political conscience. He fearlessly, continually, impetuously taught the existence of the Higher Law. He regarded the State as a moral agent, under every obligation of the moral law, — under every threatening by which it is sanctioned. How stirringly eloquent were his rushing words when this was the theme which warmed him! To him it seemed bad enough for an ignorant and passionate individual to sin: but to see a great and wise people, in the multitude of whose counsellors there ought to have been wisdom, and in whose organic equipoise of forces passion ought to have been held in leash; to see such a people, as a people, wittingly and persistently trampling under foot every principle of justice and humanity, — this fired his soul, made his blood to fairly boil with indignation! On this grand text he always could preach with "an unction." I hope I shall not be called irreverent if I say, that, on this point, "he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." I fear we have *some* need of such a teacher still.

Slavery being to him intrinsically the concentrated sum of all villainies, and at the same time the immediate occasion of nearly all the infamous political and civil action of the government, it was natural that Mr. Parker should bring his tensest powers to bear upon the demolition of the system. By all his native love of right, by all the spur of moral convictions, by all the love he bore his land, he felt bound to fight the foul institution. In this good fight he heartily enlisted all his powers, — his stinging eloquence; his varied learning; his mother-wit; his keen understanding; head, heart, hand, and — rare phenomenon! — his pocket-book.

Deadly, however, as was his hatred of the system, impetuous as were his acted and spoken hostilities against it, he

never sanctioned the radical views and measures of the ultra abolitionists. He never played into the hands of southern politicians by conceding the national character of slavery under the great Federal Charter. Nay, — loudly to his praise be it spoken! — nay. He had a lofty faith in the actual political institutions of this good land. He believed that we only need to bring back the administration of government to the spirit of those institutions, and then to lop off a few creatures of local and abnormal law, in order to make this American State answer to its proud and vaunting boast, —

"The land of the free and home of the brave."

When personal friends — warm friends — were saying, "All is lost; there is no hope save in revolution," Mr. Parker rang out his voice louder than ever over his crowded auditories, "No, no! America shall not fail!" Year after year he bore the pressure, — resisted entreaties, resisted threats; refusing to sanction the anarchic projects of his friends. Year after year he went like a man to the ballot-box, and illustrated his faith in his political principles. When others saw only swift-coming disaster, he was still hopeful; evidently believing that what the cheerful bard sang of Old England is equally true of New: —

"Our nursing mother is not exhausted yet;
There is sap in the Saxon tree:
She lifts her bosom of glory yet,
Above the mists to the sun and sea.
Fair as the Queen of Love,
Fresh from the foam,
Or star on the dark cloud set,
They may blazon her shame
And scoff at her name;
But there's life in the old land yet!"

We accord therefore to Mr. Parker, and that most cheerfully, high praise for his efforts to elevate the politics of the country. Should I say that the services he has thus rendered the American people surpass by far those of many a distinguished senator at Washington, I should but speak the truth. Had it not been for the influence of his rigorous teaching

over those vast masses which he drew around him, had they not received from him those sound principles of political responsibility which they would not go elsewhere to learn, we shudder to think of the doom which might have overtaken Boston long ere this. May God soon send them another apostle, who, without assailing the holy verities of Christianity, may carry forward with equal efficiency the same great teachings!

Such we regard the main results of Mr. Parker's ministry which deserve to be called beneficent. Other incidental goods may have accrued therefrom; but these are the chief. We have tried to deal fairly, and give our subject his fullest due. With painful feelings we turn now to the other inquiry, and ask after the evil results of the ministry now terminated. God help us, here above all, to be faithful alike to the living and to the dead. Wherein has Mr. Parker exerted a baneful influence upon the American people? Variously.

1. First, he has contributed to the extent of his ability to fix in the popular mind a very low and unworthy conception of God.

This is perhaps the very last charge his admirers will expect; but I make it advisedly. I know that men are found who claim that the chief charm in Mr. Parker's views, his grand superiority over orthodox Christians, lies precisely here, — in his sublime and beautiful delineation of God's nature and character. From such we must beg to differ. We cheerfully grant that Mr. Parker has said a great many beautiful things about God, — things whose linguistic felicities we wish we could rival. We grant that Mr. Parker's God is quite a respectable advance upon that "dismal," "diabolic" old "Moloch" of the elder Calvinistic doctors, and something of an advance upon that easy, nerveless, old grandmother whom the Universalists tucked up in the throne of the universe and set on rockers;* but, as for conceding that Mr. Parker's God

* These expressions are as offensive to the writer's taste as they can be to any reader's. They were employed solely as argument *ad hominem*. They are partly quotations from Mr. Parker, partly reflections of his style. Believing, as the writer

approaches in moral beauty or dignity or amiableness the God of the Scriptures, we never can do it. Look at the two. Mr. Parker's God is a being of such natural hebetude, and of such moral insensibility, that, according to Mr. Parker's own account, he has articled out this "mute, naked, ignorant child" of his, whom we term *man*, under the hard "apprenticeship of nature and law," and left him here toiling, struggling, suffering, and sinning for six thousand years, without ever paying him one fatherly visit, or sending him one message of affection to cheer and strengthen his failing heart. Ages on ages rolled away, according to Mr. Parker, generations after generations lived, suffered, and died, before any knowledge of God got into the human mind, — any idea even of spiritual and invisible essence. All this time men were left with no loftier or worthier vent for their native religious instinct than the worship of ugly, senseless Fetishes. And, when men did achieve a higher notion of the normal Object of this instinct, it was no thanks to this great, impassible wretch of a spectator whom Mr. Parker calls God. It was an achievement of man's own good brain and quickening heart, and to man alone belonged the credit. But even after we had done this much, even after we had risen from the mire and slime in which he first placed us, and where he had amused himself for centuries by heartlessly watching our wretched wriggling, — even then, though we had so conclusively proven that we were worthy something better than that low animalism to which he had first doomed us, that great cosmical Embodiment of phlegm moved not a finger to help us. This child of Providence was "crying in the dark," — crying for his Father. Unaided he had discovered the existence of that Father, — proven His recent whereabouts; and now he wanted to see Him. The accumulated sorrows and suffering of long millenniums of utter orphanage pressed out continual

does, that the conception of God entertained by all Christian denominations is essentially the same, he is not wont to speak of the Gods of different bodies as Mr. Parker was. He furthermore feels that he should deserve contempt had he used the above language as petulant flings at the doctrines of sister churches. These remarks will throw light upon certain expressions employed in the description of Mr. Parker's God.

sobs: "Oh that I knew where I could find Him, that I might come even unto his seat!" But there was no answer. The royal child was left there in the dark, sobbing, yearning after the Father of whom he had so lately learned, — agonizing to find Him, and learn all about Him. And all this time there lay this great, stupid, immanent Divinity athwart the stellar spaces, all heedless of this poor yearning creature who had proven himself "the thriftiest child of God." Not one syllable did He utter, no blessed "Lo! I am with you;" no messenger did He send to tell men how to do right and be happy. No, no. "If men want to know any thing about me, or about the blissfulness of moral agency, they may find it out for themselves." With this divine reflection, and with a sluggish vexation at the troublesome brat whose cry had occasioned it, the torpid old Stoic of eternity relapsed into his ancient, everlasting doze. This was Mr. Parker's God; and what did it avail to style him the tender "Father and Mother of men"? Does calling a clod "God" make it one? Does the christening of a great blind and blindly operating force "Father," give that force paternal intelligence and soft-heartedness? Should a Christian parent treat his children as Mr. Parker represents God treating his; cursing them, to begin with, with an intenser sensuality than there was any need of, and then lending no helping hand or encouraging word to help the poor little wretches up to a larger and higher life; keeping himself eternally behind the curtain; feeding them by machinery, and leaving them to clothe and otherwise furnish body and soul as the great "mother of invention" might suggest; giving them over to the laws of their being to work their own way up by personal experiment and suffering to manhood's maturity, — I say, should any Christian parent of this land attempt such a treatment of his children as this, his name would be an execration in all the world; an outraged and indignant people would rise up to demand the deposition of such a father from his office, his immediate commitment to prison or madhouse.

How different the God of revelation! "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth all them that fear

him." "His tender mercies are over all his works." In the beginning He gave His child the fairest and most munificent setting up. He was wont to visit with him at decline of day; teaching him all he needed to know, and showing him how to live. He bore with the disobedience, perversity, and waywardness of His child; plead authority; pointed to consequences; chided, entreated, "strove" with him, — all was vain. Still He came, came personally and by messengers, — would not be shut out and off the premises, — until His poor, debauched child became utterly lost to all spiritual influences, deaf even to his Father's voice, too blind to discern his heavenly form. Nor even then were the resources of God's paternal tenderness exhausted. In the person of his Son He comes with warm flesh-hands to lay hold of the ruined, blind, almost insensible creature of His own image and likeness, and lifts him up. He is willing to suffer with and for him. By supernatural power He opens those blind eyes which sin put out, unstops those deaf ears which sin closed up. Then taking the bewildered being by that death-struck hand, and breathing the inspiration of infinite divine sympathy into his soul, He gently draws him, and says, "My son, come home." He smoothes the way with providences; supports the weak and staggering form; gives back one by one the lost and forfeited powers to serve as milestones of the homeward journey; and as to what He has stored up against the prodigal's final arrival, — what fatted calves, and robes and rings, — we only know that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Whose God now is the most fatherly, Mr. Parker's or the Christian's? Why, the Christian not only has and uses every single proof and illustration of God's natural and moral perfectness which Mr. Parker has, in metaphysical necessities and in the works of nature, but in addition to these he has the whole supernatural history of man, every line and event of which is lustrous with the glory and the love of God. Had Mr. Parker described his God (and often he did) as possessing the absolute perfection of the Christian one, he had no conclusive evidence thereof. It must stand as a mere assertion, sufficiently refuted by the

stoical indifference and moral inaction, which, according to him, has characterized the divine history since man has had a being.

In view of these facts, I make no scruple in saying that Mr. Parker contributed to fix in the popular mind a low and unworthy conception of God; that he dimmed the lustre of God's perfections; and in his system, though not perhaps in his words, so presented, so misrepresented our common Father, as to make it difficult for men to feel and own His claim to their love. I do not say *he meant to do so, — I do not think he did;* but such was the legitimate result of his system. In this he wrought an irreparable mischief; and, so far forth as his views accomplished their natural tendency, so far forth I pronounce the ministry of Parker a curse to human society. Ofttimes his own expressions bordered hard on Pantheism, and the whole drift of his principles was in that direction. Strauss predicted he would bring up there Death came too quick. Although unwilling to openly assert that the famous "Father and Mother of men" was "impersonal," he yet repeatedly refused to call him (?), her (?), it (?) — whatever it was — *personal.* And this hybrid, hermaphrodite, neither "personal" nor "impersonal" Nondescript, is the false God, the Dagon, which Mr. Parker set up in Music Hall for Boston Christians to worship. So far as he seduced them into this idolatry, so far was his influence a bane.

2. Secondly: Mr. Parker was behind his times in many matters of science; and hence his influence has served to fix in the popular mind various scientific errors which later investigations have completely exploded.

It was a great pity that a man of his position and influence should have adhered so tenaciously as he did to traditional scientific absurdities, when all the world was so rapidly outgrowing them. There was some excuse for the reluctance of the Romish priesthood, and even of Protestant Turretin, to acknowledge the demonstrated motions of the earth. We find that excuse in the character of the times in which they lived, and in the character of their education, if such it could be called. But for a man of Mr. Parker's opportunities and

professions, in the full light of the nineteenth century, to cling with such fatuity to old hypotheses, from which the progress of science has confessedly knocked away every shadow of foundation, — surely this was very remarkable.

In early life, Mr. Parker seems to have fallen under the influence of those phrenological sages who have exhibited such rare consideration and anxiety for the cultivation of the American mind. He drank in their hypothesis of universal devolopment with the rest; and its influence is perceptible in the whole texture of his philosophy. I will not say that his views of cosmogony, or of current natural life, exactly corresponded with those set forth by Oken, and the author of the "Vestiges of Creation;" but I do say, that, unless I have greatly misapprehended them, they resembled them vastly more than those of the highest scientific authorities of the present day. These authorities affirm that every historical science of nature points back to a supernatural beginning of every family of organized being, — a real and proper creation. Agassiz, Whewell, Lyell, — all great scientific investigators, — declare, with remarkable unanimity, that every evidence in the heavens above and in the earth beneath lies directly against the *development* hypothesis. They challenge the world, present or past, to furnish one instance of transmuted species or spontaneous generation. Cross's *acari* and Darwin's pigeons are acknowledged failures; and I know of scarce one great, reliable name to-day, in England or America, which can be quoted in support of the repudiated hypothesis. All acknowledged authorities agree in predicating a supernatural origination of every kind of organized and living things, — an origination exceptional to all known present laws and forces; an intelligent, divine creation. It is true that Mr. Parker talks of "creation" too; but, if I understand him, it is only that perpetual creation by which the face of the earth is renewed with every passing season, generation, life. God is creating yonder on the Common, yonder in the harbor depths, here in this ever-wasting body. He *may* have used expres-

sions meaning more than this; but there are none which I can now recall.*

How far he was behind the biblical critics of Germany, we have already intimated; and on this we need not dwell. De Wette was one of the first German theologians whom Mr. Parker ever studied, and beyond him he never seems to have gone. He read others, — very many; but, after having committed himself so fully to De Wette, it was hard to see him so flippantly disposed of by Baur and his colleagues. We doubt if even Mr. Parker would venture to repeat, within hearing of Tubingen, "De Wette is the ablest writer in the world on biblical criticism." He would have too much regard for his own reputation as a scholar.

His views on another point, the History and Philosophy of Human Society, were very antiquated, at least a century behind the times. To hear him lecture on this subject, one would

* There is much confusion in Mr. Parker's expressions on this point. In Discourse V., of his "Theism, Atheism, and Popular Theology," he seems at first sight to use the terms "Creation" and "Providence" in their ordinary sense. He clearly distinguishes them; saying "the one is described by a point, the other by a line. He speaks not only of the creation of organic beings, but of inorganic matter. He speaks of a time "before the universe had existence," &c. &c. At the same time, it is evident that the term *creation* is not employed in its proper sense, from the fact that he predicates a certain "material," anterior even to material atoms, from which they were created. He says, in summing up: "*Each atom*, with its statical and dynamical powers, — the mineral, vegetable, and animal forces of the universe, — must have been *created* by Him . . . OF PERFECT MATERIAL." Here, certainly, is no *creatio ex nihilo;* hence, no proper creation at all. The popular, as well as the theological, *usus* demands more than a creation *ex nihilo privativo;* it is satisfied with nothing short of a *creatio ex nihilo negativo.* Nor is the above a solitary instance. He scarcely ever speaks of creation without stating that it was "of perfect material," or "perfect substance." That his views respecting the origin of organic beings were substantially as represented in the text, is incontestably settled by the following passage from his last work, his "Experience as a Minister." Speaking of the various historic forms of religion, he says: "Each has grown out of the condition of some people as naturally as the wild primitive Flora of Santa Cruz has come from the state of this island, — its geologic structure, and chemical composition, its tropic heat, and its special situation amid the great currents of water and of air; as naturally as the dependent Fauna of the place comes from its Flora." What could more explicitly betray his belief that the Fauna of every clime proceed from its Flora, its Flora from geologic, chemical, climatic, and other physical causes in the way of strict and simple natural law? It may be hard to reconcile this language with expressions employed in his earlier years; but it surely right to look in his latest writings for his most matured opinious. So doing, we think our point is fully substantiated.

think himself transported back to the eighteenth century. First you have Hobbes's "State of Nature;" then "Rousseau's "*Contrat Social;*" then a prospective "*Utopia Saint-Simonienne,*" minus the communism. And the most insipid feature of it all is, that these crudities of the French revolutionary epoch are all set forth as something *so* new and fresh and world redeeming. How any man of such universal reading, and such taste for independence, ever succeeded in bringing himself down to the tasteless taskwork of transfusing life into these stale depositions of that diluvian period, has always been a mystery to me. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the fact that deistic principles cannot be reconciled with any other theory of human society than that of Rousseau; and, rather than renounce these cherished principles, Mr. Parker may have concluded he could afford to ignore the conclusions of a Stahl and a Huntington, — nay more, the unanimous testimony of universal history.

Now, had these various antiquated views been merely abstract, isolated, scientific errors, it would have mattered little. We should not have mentioned them. We care not to know to which of the theories of light Mr. Parker gave his adherence, — it would have no bearing on our present investigation. These matters to which I have alluded, however, do have relations most intimate to every scheme of religious teaching. Deny original creation, ignore a *real* Providence, and what is left of religion? The remnant is not worth saving. So far forth then as Mr. Parker's ministry has served to the dissemination and conservation in the popular mind of those old exploded naturalistic notions of Cosmogony, Anthropology, Sociology, so far forth it has been a maleficent ministry, prejudicial not merely to revealed religion, but equally so to sound science.

3. Thirdly: Mr. Parker devoted his utmost energy to the demolition of the whole structure of revealed religion, — its evidences, doctrines, and institutions alike. If he honestly believed, after candid qualification for judgment, that that system is false, delusive, injurious to men, he did right; but, as I as honestly believe it a true, beneficent, and divine sys-

tem, I am bound to characterize the influence of his ministry in this regard as unmitigatedly disastrous.

4. But, fourthly, the grand tendency of Mr. Parker's ministry was not only to overturn Christianity ; it was also to diffuse erroneous and unfair impressions respecting it. I am forced to say, that misrepresentation *seems to me* to have been the grand implement on which Mr. Parker relied in his "destructant work." Certainly no other ever wrought so efficiently for him. Instead of making Romanism responsible for its own follies and absurdities, Calvinism for its, Methodism for its, he identifies Christianity with each in turn, and makes it bear the odium of all. He perpetually aspersed the Christian people among whom he lived, attributing to them beliefs which he knew they repudiated with loathing. To be a Christian was with him to be a bibliolater, — to devoutly believe in what he elegantly termed the "damnation of babies," to discount all gentle virtues and good works, and bigotedly hate all such as cherish and do them. It was to believe in a hideous God, an impossible human nature, a dismal demonology, ghastly divine murders, and a closing sham-judgment. He tried to undermine men's faith in Revelation, — not half so much by solid argument, as by those side-thrusts and bitter sneers and sarcasms which constituted so largely the staple of his discourses. Travestying every sacred formula, every holy doctrine, until scarcely recognizable, he persisted in setting these wicked mimicries forth as the actual beliefs of Christendom.

Take up any of his descriptions of the doctrine of God according to the "popular theology." In the name of Evangelical Christendom, I have merely to pronounce it an atrocious libel. Tell me, ye who have sat for twenty, thirty, forty years under the teachings of the "Christian" pulpit I now fill, — tell me if in all that time you have ever once been told of a God who delights in "the damnation of babies"? Nay, were there not eloquent, vehement repudiations of such a shocking notion ringing down from hence upon the people years before Mr. Parker was born? Who has ever stood up here to tell you of a God who has unconditionally predesti-

nated men to endless damnation merely to illustrate his irresistible sovereignty? Was not this pulpit founded here expressly to protest against such blasphemy, and to teach men truth? Who has ever stood here and told you that God is of so *vengeful* a nature, that, only after slaying his own innocent son, he was willing to show mercy? When was you last told that Satan was stronger than God, and likely to get the better of him in the long run? Come: these, according to Mr. Parker, are the doctrines of "popular theology." Isn't Methodist theology popular theology? If it is not, if the theology of the largest ecclesiastical body in the nation cannot be called the popular theology, what can? If it were true that one Christian body, however small, taught a doctrine of God *nearly* free from all the objectionable features against which Mr. Parker protested, candor would seem to have required him to make an exception in favor of that body so far as it was his ally. How much more was he bound to abstain from indiscriminately denouncing the doctrine of the largest church of the land, when the doctrine of that church respecting God was, as we have seen, really superior to his own, and especially when she patiently, laboriously, and successfully opposed this doctrine to all the errors against which he battled, years and years before his voice was ever lifted! In all this Mr. Parker was, in my estimation, neither modest nor fair. Most of his references to the best and holiest men now living on this earth are full of bitterness and spleen and venom. We have no angry retaliations to return. Even an Alva could refuse to war with the dead. We only *wish* these statements were *not* true; but, being true, we feel compelled to make them, doing it far "more in sorrow than in anger."

I believe, on valid grounds, — though I cannot, of course, adduce those grounds here, — that man originated by direct creation of God. I believe that if he had been left, *in puris naturalibus*, to his own unaided, uninformed constitutional powers and susceptibilities, he would have been the ignorant, helpless brute which Mr. Parker everywhere represents the primitive man to have been. I do not believe, however, that man was so unnaturally abandoned; or that, had he been, he

would ever have risen to any conception of spiritual existences. I believe God revealed himself to that primitive creature as his Creator, as the one and only God to whom his service and affection were due. I believe, that, after sin had penally and naturally affected man, that which was before mere inertia in human nature became a constant downward force,— antagonized indeed by reason, conscience, divine actuations, but nevertheless a steady moral gravitation. From the beginning God has kept himself in communication with this perverted creature; schooling him by discipline, overruling his mistakes and sins for good, thwarting his plots, wooing and striving and teaching in all tender and gentle languages, — more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him than earthly parents are to give good gifts unto their children. In the Bible are found, as I believe, a historical account of these divine doings in the earth, sufficiently full for all the necessities of these late-coming generations to which we belong,— a sufficient revelation of the character and interior disposition of God; a clear enunciation of all human duty, Godward, manward, and self-ward; authenticated promises of all needed good; the full constitutions and patents of all divine institutions; in short, a complete "Anweissung zum seligen Leben,"— the ONLY directory to happiness and heaven. Believing these things with all the intensity which can come from a conquered skepticism, and a personal experience alike of sin and of pardon, I regard them as truths more vital to human well-being, on the scale of endless existence, than any other in the whole range of human knowledge. Whenever, therefore, I see a man weakening the power and influence of those truths over men's minds, either by fair argument or by scurrilous sneers, I regard that man as, wittingly or unwittingly, injuring his race, — cursing humanity to an extent beyond all measurement. Of Mr. Parker's ministry, then, what else can I say than that, so far as its influence has been to undermine these grand permanent beliefs of Christendom, it has been a curse. In my view, every soul which through his influence has renounced the great doctrines of Christian redemption has thereby jeopardized his everlasting interests. He has cut loose from moral motives

of the highest character; relinquished the brightest exemplification of divine philanthropy the universe can furnish; exchanged a certainty for hypotheses, pledge for hope, possession for baseless and fruitless expectation. By as much, then, as eternal things do overweigh the things of time, by so much do the evil and blighting influences of Mr. Parker's ministry preponderate over all its good and beneficent ones. No open peculator from Boston's treasury, no unrelenting, heartless landlord, no dissolute public officer, no wholesale or retail rumseller, no pimp of North Street or seducer of Beacon, has ever wrought, in my judgment, such extensive, effectual, irretrievable mischief in this city, since the advent of this distinguished errorist in it, as has he.* Funds are replacable, wrongs to widow or fatherless may be outgrown, the debauched may be lifted up by reform; but, when the Saviour is taken away, where shall the most wakeful of Marys find him? Other evils need only be temporal: the loss of religion is the loss of eternity.

Theodore Parker, the studious farm-boy, the restive theologue, the combative preacher, the arrogant philosopher, the ardent reformer, the general iconoclast, — Theodore Parker, — has passed away. In the prime of life, the maturity of his powers, the zenith of his glory, God summons him away. He had done with him here; and that autocratic will could not alter one hair's breadth the higher will of God. In his hands, into which each one of us must fall, we leave him. Ours is not the great white throne; and he who told us, "Judge not," assigned the best of reasons.

But whilst it is not given to us to sit in judgment on men's

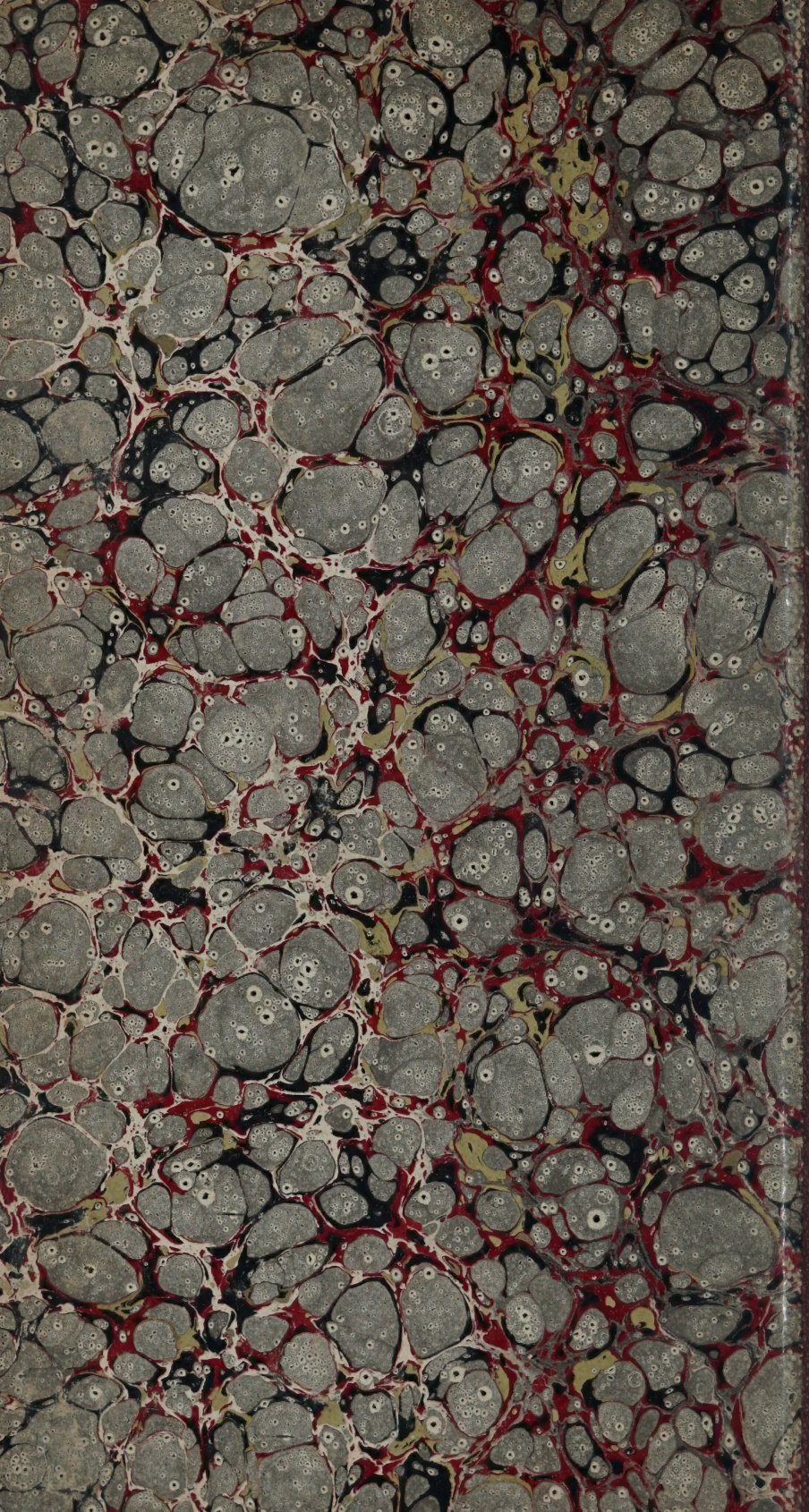
* Had the writer, instead of using the above language, tamely said that Mr. Parker's influence in opposition to Christianity had done *immeasurable or infinite harm*, it is extremely doubtful whether the statement would have ever called forth a single remark. Why, then, need such an ado be made, when the opinion is expressed that the harm thus wrought has been greater than certain definite and limited evils? The writer does not say that Mr. Parker was a peculator, a rumseller, or a seducer; he simply endeavors to express his profound sense of the evil wrought by the agency of Mr. Parker. Were he a disciple of Mr. Parker, he should need to employ a similar style of comparison, in order to vividly express his profound sense of the good wrought by the same agency. A tame, worn-out adjective could never do it.

souls, and fix authoritatively their moral relationship to God, we may and ought to studiously weigh their current and posthumous influence. The interests of truth and the interests of men alike demand it. I have striven, therefore, in these rude sentences, — put hastily together amid all the distractions and under all the lassitude which belong to the closing hours of Anniversary Week, — to set forth *candidly, kindly,* and *faithfully* my soberest, maturest estimate of the good and evil in the influence of Theodore Parker. I feel that I have failed to do justice to such a theme. Perhaps I should still, were I to study it a lifetime.

Mr. Parker is gone. We shall have no more. Not that genius is extinct. Not that learning shall have no future votary. Not that deism will not live, — it will live so long as man's proud heart shall think itself wiser than God. Still, to stand in Music Hall, to promulgate the views of Parker, to do it with equal keenness and superior grace, to draw yet denser crowds of willing listeners, — all this will not be to BE PARKER. Do you not see the vast difference between being PARKER and merely a "PARKERITE"? Ask Rochefoucauld, and he will tell you of a difference.*

Few will weep. Few have wept, I take it, except upon the platform. It is not meet. Whatever his work was, in this strange web of woven lives, Providence tells us it is done. Why is it not? Boston has other teachers, — inculcators of higher doctrine, more liberal charity, safer science, superior virtues, equal political integrity, and a diviner holiness of heart and life. No such hideous excrescences deform the Christian teaching of present Boston evangelizers, as need to drive away the most fastidious, be he only honest, and anxious to learn from any and all sources, — Nature, Reason, Provience, Revelation, Experience, — the one grand Will of God.

Friends, are you trying to learn that Will? Are you trying

* One would think the above language clear to any ordinary understanding; but, as it has been absurdly misconstrued, the writer would add, that the difference spoken of is simply that which exists between feeling one's self a master and enjoying the glory of such a position, and feeling one's self a mere disciple and incapable of ever becoming any thing more.

to do it? But a few days, and you will be helpless. Body prostrated, spirits dissipated, mind roving, heart sluggish, your soul face to face with destinies unending. How, then, will you look upon life, and the uses to which you are putting it? Oh! if ever you have suffered your religious convictions to be shaken by sneers or cavils or argument, I pray you to look at the winning and beautiful model of character which Christianity holds up, and to ask yourself if it be not desirable. I pray you to think of the misery God foretells, and the heaven he promises, and to ask yourself, What if this prove *all true?* Even if you have so far been influenced as to *doubt*, give your poor soul the benefit of that doubt, — it is a principle of all humane jurisprudence. May the great Father of Lights guide you into all truth; give you all a stronger relish for it; qualify you for celestial blessedness; and bring you finally into its full fruition, no more to err, or sin, or suffer, — no more to miss or frustrate life's divine, eternal meaning. This in Christ. — AMEN.